

# Civil War History

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On the cover: Charleston, S.C. The Mills House, with adjacent ruins

## CONTRIBUTORS

**MOLLY C. MERSMANN** (Phd, Purdue) is an assistant professor of American history at Marshall University, specializing in the American Civil War and Reconstruction, with a focus on rebuilt environments, race, and gender.

**BILL L. SMITH** is a DPhil student at the University of Oxford, where he is working on a multispecies history of slavery, emancipation, and Reconstruction. He is also a public-school history and political science teacher.

## EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

The March 2026 issue is noticeably slimmer than previous editions. The combination of pandemic aftershocks and a contracting academic job market has resulted in a decrease in submissions; however, we remain optimistic that this is a temporary challenge. We recently launched a new website and had been seeking a successor for Sarah Gardner as book review editor. Matthew Fox-Amato, an associate professor at the University of Idaho and a nationally and internationally recognized historian of the United States and scholar of art and visual culture, has agreed to assume this role and join the Editorial Mantle at *Civil War History*. He previously participated in our roundtable on Deb Willis's book on the photography of Black soldiers, published the brilliant article "Iconoclasm and the Destruction of Confederate Memory," and will be guest-editing a special issue on Reconstruction photography next year. His expertise in visual and material culture further exemplifies the journal's interdisciplinary commitments.

This issue focuses on both the built and natural environments, offering exciting approaches to the study of the Civil War. In "Building the Confederacy's Future During Wartime," Molly Mersmann upends the traditional historiographical understanding of the rebuilding of the South as a product of Reconstruction. She explains how the Confederacy worked to rebuild Charleston following a fire that damaged the city, which was rumored to have been started by enslaved people. The article presents a fresh new interpretation of the Confederacy during the war.

This issue also features a compelling article, "Unleashed, Unbridled, and Unchained: Dogs and Horses During the Civil War and Reconstruction," by Bill Smith. Deftly bringing animal studies into direct conversation with Civil War studies, Smith explains "how nonhuman forces shaped military outcomes, disrupted interspecies power dynamics, and redefined emancipation." From an environmental perspective, he highlights how the "sheer number of horses and dogs lost throughout the conflict materially weakened the Confederate military's ability to wage war while also eroding the planter class's control over those they enslaved." This most original piece will change how we imagine the Southern landscape.